Herskovits & Herskovits S-6 (1928-1929) 1934
Bush Negroes
Surinam

and tall as the Granman's wife herself, though in circumference no larger than the post of the house against which it leaned. The woven strands were caught together in the loops with which it was finished on top and bottom.

When it had been filled, the matapi was hung from the stub of a stout limb, and one end of an equally stout stick was inserted into the bottom loop, while the other rested on the ground. Now Wilhelmina and another woman sat down on this stick, and under the pressure exerted by their combined weight the matapi slowly contracted. A milky white fluid containing the poison which made the raw bitter cassava so deadly filtered through the woven strands, trickling into the gourd placed to receive it. Steadily the poisonous fluid was forced out until it was not long before the gourd was filled, and the cassava pressed dry. When there was much work to be done, and the white woman was not about to ask questions, the women would not waste their time sitting on the stick, but instead would suspend heavy stones from thongs tied to the bottom loop, and they were then free to be about their other tasks. Now, however, it was more amusing to sit and talk.

Whatever the method, when the meal was rid of the poison, it was worked through the sifter into a closely woven basket, and in that kneaded and made ready for baking on the large iron griddles. The use of the bitter cassava they had learned from the Indians, and the names for the sifter and the cassava press were to this day Indian, as were their weave and shape, but the griddles came from the white man's city.

"We use Indian water jars, too. The red pottery we do not make. But black obia pots are Negro things. These our old women mold," said the Granman's wife.

3

As she spun cotton for the garters she would later make, the woman they called the Granman's younger wife sat and talked of working the fields. Her spindle, a small iron

M. Herskovits & Herskovits F-6 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

rod set into a base of clay, rotated steadily as she worked. Her fingers moved fast, for she did not require too fine a thread. The raw cotton, she said, she got from a wild "cotton tree." Cotton which was picked in the fields and which grew from seeds planted in the ground, she did not know at all. Was there such cotton?

Working in the fields, she continued, was not too difficult. It was a woman's work. A woman did not mind it. From earliest childhood girls followed their mothers about, and learned how to work the fields.

"What is hard is having to cut my own field. I have no man to cut it for me. I must cut it myself."

She paused for an instant to right her thread.

"When I plant my field, and pray to the gods to make the seed grow, then I ask the Earth Mother to help me find a way to get a man to cut my field for me. 'Earth Mother,' I say, 'help me find a man to cut my field. I have great need of a man to burn my ground.' . . . "

Seeing two women approach, she said, "Fenekonde here is like myself, she too needs a man to cut her field."

But this needed explaining. Here were two women who called the Granman "husband," and who shared the difficulty of having to clear their own fields.

It was soon made apparent, however, that both of these women were only nominally wives of the Granman. They had married into his family. When kunu, however, killed one successor to his office after the other, these women were made widows. Like the widow who now worked alone before her house which fronted the clearing, where stood the shrine to the great gods and the Granman's principal houses, they had worn tattered clothes, and a twisted kerchief as a band on their heads. For five months this had lasted, and then a dance was given.

Did the white woman know about the ceremony called *pai Adyo*?

The white woman had heard the word Dyo-dyo from natives of the town many times. Once, indeed, a question about it put to an old woman, who it later developed was

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

The wooden combs used by the Bush Negroes are a most direct West African heritage, being found along the Upper Guinea coast, Ashanti, Cameroons, Ivory and Gold Coasts, Dahomey, Mumi, and many other regions of Africa. The wooden plates and trays are likewise found among the Ewe-speaking tribes of the West Coast.

The custom of personal decoration by the cicatrization of the skin is very common throughout many parts of Africa. Captain John Stedman remarks on this strange habit in his *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition to Surinam:* "The Loango Negroes distinguish themselves by puncturing or marking the skin of their sides, arms, and thighs with square, elevated figures something like dice." This custom was widespread on the Slave Coast. The scar designs varied widely according to the different tribes as well as the social position and wealth of the individual. As the Indians of South America do not practise this cicatrization, it is evident that the Bush Negroes brought it over with them from their former home.

The Bush Negro coiffure, the method of arranging the hair in plaited tufts, is found also on the Gold Coast, in Cameroons, and elsewhere in Africa. The Djuka method of weaving is similar to that of the Sudan, Gold Coast, Mandingo, Ashanti, and the Ewe. The spindle used in weaving is called by an African term, *kyekye*, a Twi word. The woven leg band, the *sepu*, is the same as the leg bands found in Cameroons and the Upper Guinea coast in general.

The method of finding out who is responsible for the

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

African comb, from the region of Nigeria, is shown on page 175. It can be seen that the wooden comb is not a Djuka invention, as every characteristic of the Bush Negro pieces can be found on this West African piece, except the ornamental piercing.

The arts of weaving and basketry are not as highly developed among the Djukas as is the carving of wooden implements. The Bush Negroes do not weave the cotton cloth they wear. It is obtained, instead, by trading at the white settlements. The only weaving among them consists of cotton leg and arm bands—things that do not count for much so far as industry is concerned, but which expand the wearer's ego and add enormously to his or her self-esteem. The basketry of the Djukas, like the weaving, is simple and competent. Unornamented circular baskets, varying in size from a foot to a yard in diameter, can be seen in all the villages. They are used for carrying yams, rice, and foodstuffs generally. The finest basket work does not occur in these baskets, however, but in the cassava squeezers, those elongated tubes for producing cassava flour. These are beautifully woven of uniform rattan, and decorated with darker strips to form a simple pattern near each end. The finished product is an admirable piece of work, of which the owner must indeed be proud.

Pottery is made by the Djukas for utilitarian purposes only, and the solid black, absolutely undecorated clay ware has no particular element of beauty. The pots are black, stolid, and unimaginative. They are simply necessities.

But when the necessities of life have been provided for,

/10 cont./

574 The politeness shown toward a guest springs from the idea that unknowingly one of them might easily take the very piece that the important person wished to have, and although no comment would be made on this, it could nonetheless happen that this would trouble the guest for whom they cherish special respect, 118 or that he would thereby consider himself insulted. It is particularly to old age that they pay great respect.

Chapter VI

Household and Agricultural Implements

412 [322] [124] [531] The Bush Negroes mainly use adzes in order to hew their corjalen or canoes out of trees partially burned out beforehand; furthermore, they use planes and chisels in order to work their (usually cedarwood) (1) stools and pareh or paddles (2). They are

1. Cedrela odorata L.

2. Hand oar.

especially fond of having these carved with many figures. For them the machete is an indispensable tool that they always carry around and use as a chopping knife, sword, and knife, indeed, even to cut splinters or thorns out of the foot with the tip. They use field axes or hatchets to cut down the bush in order to lay out their small cultivation grounds and to work the wood that they float by rafts and sell.

562 412 [124] [413] The women possess, aside from a machete or knife, also mattocks with which they keep their lands and the place near the dwelling neat; they make brooms from the pina palm racemes or from rice ears bound in sheaves. They like to have scissors, needles, and pins, while for knitting they use a pointed and bent nail.

413 [283] [286] They spin their sewing thread from cotton with a certain tool which they call kekē; they also have a round, wooden tool called sepoe, with which they very nicely and sturdily /11/ make

/11 cont./

286 [413] garments /pandjen/ or articles of dress and other knitted goods. They also know how to make very attractive hammocks of cotton.

Chapter VII

Food, Drinks, Delicacies, and so forth.

262 [252] Their daily food is mainly rice and cassava (1) bread which

1. Sweet cassava, the farina from the root of the Jatropha manihot, not to be confused with Jatropha manihot, which gives the bitter cassava, which, however much is removed by boiling and continued washing, contains a very poisonous component.

is baked on an iron plate and provides a tasty food that can be [241] kept for a long time. During the dry season, the months of September, October, and November, the ground also supplies them with a very mealy and tasty tuber called nappi (2); throughout the year,

2. Dioscorea sativa and Dioscorea alata L.

however, they grow yams, sweet potatoes (3), toyers (4), and cassava.

3. Convolvulus batatas L. and Batatas edulis Choisy.

4. Root from Arum esculentum.

[439] They have bananas only from time to time, whenever they exchange them on plantations for squared wood, which they pur- [432] posely work for this exchange. They know how to obtain wild game [265] and fish in great quantities; salt is an article greatly in demand.

/151 cont./

249 greatly to the beautification of the village. The Bush Negroes use
[232] the red dyestuff from the seeds to smear on the dogs against vermin.

Cotton (katoen).

248 One sees it standing in various places along the edges of the
283 villages and among the dwelling hum. The cotton itself is in ex-
[284] ceptional cases used by the women for spinning. Calf bands
(sepoi) are made out of cotton thread after the Indian model, and
sometimes hammocks also.

Coffee.

245 Is found here and there in the forest along the edge of the
[272] village (Dierstabbetje, Poekoeti). It is the small variety, probably
Coffea arabica. The beans are used for coffee. The trees prob-
ably grew from kernels that at one time were taken by slaves from
the plantations.

Calebash (kabasi).

284 Grows everywhere among the dwelling hum and in neglected
[415] corners. A distinction is made between kabasi and pikien soepoen.
The wood-like pericarps of both varieties are used for all kinds
of purposes, especially for utensils (bowls, spoons) and as "knife"
for scooping the kanjalein empty.

Kanjoes (kanoeng).

245 Occurs here and there and ordinarily does not supply much
[262] fruit, the latter is eaten fresh, the kernels sometimes roasted
252] like pinda.

Mappa.

Probably a variety of Tabernaemontana (Apocynaceae). Not
infrequently in May one sees the women returning from the grounds
with pear-shaped /152/ (up to ten centimeters long) yellow fruit,
[262] which they have gathered from a small forest tree. The fruit is
eaten fresh: one first taps on the rind with a piece of wood in
order to concentrate the milk sap in it, peels the fruit, and the